



C ommunity A ssistance and T echnical S ervices

CONNECTION

PHMSA Pipeline Safety Program

JUNE 2006

Barrett Confirmed

2006 PSIA



Responses to Congress

Final Rules

On Friday, May 26, the Senate confirmed Admiral Thomas J. Barrett as the Administrator of PHMSA. Admiral Barrett retired from the United States Coast Guard (USCG), having served for more than 35 years, where he directed USCG operations in the North Pacific, including the Gulf of Alaska, the Eastern Bering Sea, and the Arctic Ocean. The admiral's civilian and military education includes a law degree from George Washington University, and graduation in residence from the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

The reauthorization-and-oversight process for the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act is underway! To date, two hearings in the House have been held:

1. March 16 – House Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines
Testimony at: <http://www.house.gov/transportation> Click on “schedule”, scroll down to the March hearing announcement, and clicking on the “Pipeline Safety” link.
2. April 17 – House Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality. Testimony at: <http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/Hearings/04272006hearing1845/hearing.htm>

Among other things, proposed legislation provides for new civil penalty authority to enforce the use of one-call notification systems; establishes a grant program to encourage effective State damage prevention programs; raises the matching level for federal funding of state pipeline safety programs from 50 percent to 80 percent, and expands on the criteria PHMSA may use to issue safety orders intended to address pipeline conditions before they result in an incident.

PHMSA responded to questions about enforcement of the Pipeline Safety Act. This letter provides enforcement data from 2000 until March 2006. It is available at http://www.house.gov/commerce_democrats/Press_109/PHMSA.041806.response.pdf

PHMSA responded to requests for information regarding BP's spill on the North Slope of Alaska in March, 2006. PHMSA's response is available at http://www.house.gov/commerce_democrats/Press_109/109-DOT.Response.4-25-06.north.slope.oil.spill.ltr.pdf.

Gas Gathering Line Definition; Alternative Definition for Onshore Lines and proposed Safety Standards. Effective April 13, 2006. Summary: Adopts a consensus standard (API RP 80) to distinguish onshore gathering lines from other gas pipelines and production operations and establishes safety rules for lines in rural areas using a risk based approach. See Docket No. RSPA-1998-4868 for additional information.

Update of Regulatory References to Technical Standards. Effective July 10, 2006. Summary: This final rule updates the pipeline safety regulations to incorporate by reference all or parts of new editions of voluntary consensus technical standards: <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/pdf/E6-9059.pdf>

Pending Regulations

MAOP Waivers

Upcoming Workshops June 26-27 Alexandria, VA

DIMP Update

Public Awareness Highlights

NTSB Recommendations

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Up for vote by the Technical Advisory Committees at the June 28, 2006 meeting:

Integrity Management: Program Modifications and Clarifications – Request for Comments. Docket No. PHMSA-04-18938

Summary: PHMSA proposes revisions to the current Pipeline Safety Regulations for pipeline Integrity Management in High Consequence Areas. Revisions are to 1) allow more flexibility in reassessment intervals, 2) require notifications for pressure reductions for repairs and 3) allow other methods for calculating reduced operating pressure.

Pipeline Safety: Design and Construction Standards to Reduce Internal Corrosion in Gas Transmission Pipelines. Docket No. PHMSA-2005-22642

Summary: Proposed rule requires an operator to take steps in design and construction to reduce the risk that liquids collecting within the pipeline could result in failures because of internal corrosion. Revisions apply to new construction and replaced gas transmission pipelines.

Maximum Allowable Operating Pressure Waivers – PHMSA is evaluating operator requests individually based on pre-determined criteria which includes pipe design, hydro-test data, SCADA system characteristics, construction processes, operating history, and environmental factors. Three decisions are pending and more requests are anticipated.

June 26 - Hazardous Liquid Low Stress Lines. PHMSA seeks comment on its risk-based approach to addressing unregulated low stress lines.

June 27 - Controller Certification Pilot Program – Required by Section 13(b) of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002, the Pilot Program assesses whether current regulations are sufficient, and if a certification process for controllers is warranted. Critical factors emerging from the study and the NTSB recommendations affecting pipeline control and operations will be discussed at the June 27th workshop. A report of the study will be provided to Congress by December 17, 2006.

“Assuring the Integrity of Gas Distribution Pipeline Systems: A Report to the Congress,” was issued in May 2005. The Phase I report listed 7 elements to be included in a high-level flexible regulation. PHMSA and NAPSRS have requested that the Gas Piping Technology Committee develop companion guidance in parallel with the forthcoming regulation. A final rule is anticipated by 2007. Refer to Docket Number 19854 for more information.

The final rule for Pipeline Operator Public Awareness Programs is effective June 20, 2006. Operators should have their communications plans completed by this date and begin implementation. Operators are encouraged to use the existing Online Data Entry System (ODES) to submit written programs. PHMSA will issue guidance on how to submit programs by publishing an Advisory Bulletin in the Federal Register soon. FAQ's are available at http://primis.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/Public_Awareness_FAQs_01-20-2006.pdf

June 8, 2006 - Safety Recommendation P-06-5. The National Transportation Safety Board makes the following safety recommendation to the Plastics Pipe Institute: Revise your butt-fusion joining procedure for plastic gas pipe to (1) stress PHMSA will request programs by publishing an Advisory Bulletin in the Federal Register of inspecting the finished joint, (2) include guidance on the joining of coiled pipe, and (3) include a requirement for the avoidance of mitering.

June 8, 2006 - Safety Recommendation P-06-4. The National Transportation Safety Board makes the following safety recommendation to US Poly Company: Revise your butt-fusion procedures to include a requirement for the avoidance of mitering in plastic gas pipe joints.